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*Century association, New York.*

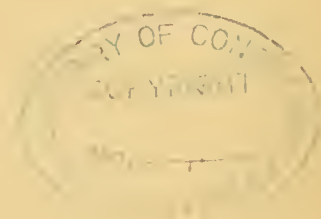
THE

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BRYANT FESTIVAL

AT

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"The Century,"

NOVEMBER 5, M.DCCC.LXIV.



NEW YORK :  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,  
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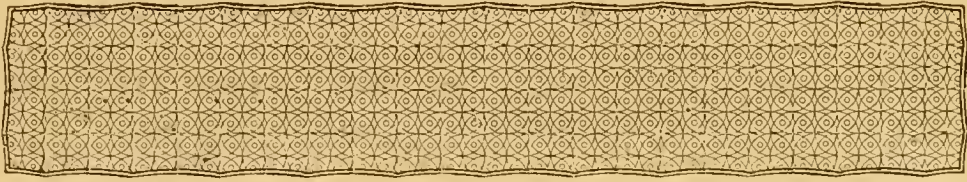
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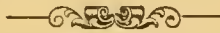
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## The Bryant Festival.



“**T**HE CENTURY,” of which Mr. BRYANT was one of the original founders and trustees, and remains an assiduous member, by a spontaneous movement resolved to seize the occasion of his entrance into his seventieth year, to mark their good will to their beloved associate and their pride in his fame. The third of November was the day of his birth ; the evening of the fifth was selected for their festival. Invitations to be present were sent to many of his friends in various parts of the country ; and, as was expected, met with the most cordial responses and acceptance. Some idea of the design got abroad, and notwithstanding the excitement of an impending national election, there were abundant evidences that it touched the sympathy of the great public.

As the company at the appointed time entered the house of the Century, they found the hall decorated with long and graceful lines of festoons of fresh flowers and evergreen. The gallery, which was brilliantly and skillfully lighted, was hung round with five-and-twenty new pictures, and a work in sculpture, all by members of the Century. These were "*The Mischief Maker*," by LEUTZE; a *Marine View*, a *Sea-Coast*, and a *Sketch from Nature*, by KENSETT; "*The Seventh Regiment in Camp*," and a *Scene on the Coast of Maine*, by GIFFORD; a *Landscape*, by CROUSEY; "*Lonely*," by HENNESSY; a *portrait*, by LE CLEAR; *Nahant Coast*, and a *Sketch from Nature*, by HASELTINE; "*Dogs and Rat*," by HAYS; "*Venice*," by HUNTINGTON; "*Sunny Hours*," by LANG; "*Reading the News*," and "*A Flower-girl*," by ROSSITER; "*Evening*," by COLMAN; "*By the Sea*," by BENSON; "*Study of a Horse*," by DANA; "*Lady of Seville*," by HALL; a *portrait*, by STONE; a *portrait*, "*The Carrier Pigeon*," "*The Companions*," and "*In the Woods*," by HICKS; and the model of a horse, by BROWN.

Precisely at nine o'clock, the procession, consisting of Mr. Bryant, the guests of the Century, and its officers, moved into the large saloon, to the music of a band in the balcony. The room was already filled by about four hundred persons, members of the Century, and ladies. The decorations were exclusively of natural flowers, which had been sent by mem-

bers of the Association in profusion, as if the season had been the last of spring rather than early winter. Behind the raised platform on which Mr. Bryant and the President took their seats, was a lyre, composed entirely of fresh violets, amaranths, and immortelles, and in its strings the initials of the poet's name were written in flowers. Above the lyre was his marble bust, crowned with laurel. Upon the walls were hung various passages from his poems, inscribed on tablets in letters of gold. Among others equally appropriate were these :

In such a bright, late quiet would that I  
 Might wear out life like thee, 'mid bowers and brooks,  
 And dearer yet, the sunshine of kind looks,  
 And music of kind voices ever nigh.

---

For thou hast taught us with delighted eye,  
 To gaze upon the mountains—to behold  
 With deep affection the pure, ample sky,  
 And clouds along its blue abysses rolled—  
 To love the song of waters, and to hear  
 The melody of winds with charmed ear.

---

His love of truth, too warm, too strong  
 For Hope or Fear to chain or chill,  
 His hate of Tyranny and wrong,  
 Burn in the breasts he kindled, still.

Let the mimic canvas show  
 His calm, benevolent features ; let the light  
 Stream o'er his deeds of love, that shunned the fight  
 Of all but Heaven ; and in the book of fame  
 The glorious record of his virtues write,  
 And hold it up to men, and bid them claim  
 A palm like his, and catch from him the hallowed flame.

No sooner had the music ceased, than the President rose, and amidst every evidence of the unanimous adhesion of the audience, spoke as follows :

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT :

The Century has set apart this evening to show you honor. All its members, the old and the young, crowd around you like brothers round a brother—like children round a father. Our wives and daughters have come with us, that they, too, may join in the pleasant office of bearing witness to your worth. The artists of our association, whose labors you have ever been ready to cheer, whose merits you have loved to proclaim, unite to bring an enduring memorial to your excellence in an art near akin to their own. A noble band of your compeers in your own high calling, from all parts of the country, offer their salutations and praise and good wishes in a full chorus of respect and affection. Others, who could not accept our invitation, keep the festival by themselves, and are now in their own homes going over the years which you have done so much to gladden.

It is primarily your career as a poet that we celebrate. The moment is well chosen. While the mountains and the ocean side



ring with the tramp of cavalry and the din of cannon, and the nation is in its agony, and an earthquake sweeps through the land, we take a respite to escape into the serene region of ideal pursuits which can never fail.

It has been thought praise enough of another to say that he "wrote no line which dying he could wish to blot." Every line which you have written may be remembered by yourself and by others at all times, for your genius has listened only to the whisperings of the beautiful and the pure.

Moreover, a warm nationality runs through all your verse. Your imagination took the hue of the youth of our country, and has reflected its calm contemplative moods, when the pulses of its early life beat vigorously but smoothly, and no bad passions had distorted its countenance. The clashing whirlwinds of civil war, the sublime energy and perseverance of the people, the martyrdom of myriads of its bravest and best, its new birth through terrible sufferings, will give a more passionate and tragic and varied cast to the literature of the coming generations. A thousand years hence posterity will turn to your pages as to those which best mirror the lovely earnestness of the rising republic, the sweet musings of her years of innocence, when she was all unfamiliar with sorrow, bright with the halo of promise, seizing the great solitudes by the busy hosts of civilization, and guiding the nations of the earth into the pleasant paths of freedom and of peace.

You have derived your inspiration as a poet from your love of nature, and she has returned your affection and blessed you as her favored son. At three score and ten years your eye is undimmed, your step light and free as in youth, and the lyre which ever responded so willingly to your touch refuses to leave your hand.

Our tribute to you is to the poet ; but we should not have paid it had we not revered you as a man. Your blameless life is a continuous record of patriotism and integrity ; and passing untouched through the fiery conflicts that grow out of the ambition of others, you have, as all agree, preserved a perfect consistency with yourself, and an unswerving, unselfish fidelity to your convictions.

This is high praise, but the period at which we address you removes even the suspicion of flattery, for it is your entrance upon your seventieth year. It is a solemn thing to draw nearer and nearer to eternity ; you teach us how to meet old age. With each year you have become more and more genial, have cherished larger and still larger sympathies with your fellow-men, and if time has set on you any mark, you preserve in all its freshness the youth of the soul.

What remains but to wish you a long-continued life, crowned with health and prosperity, with happiness and honour ? Live on till you hear your children's children rise up and call you blessed. Live on for the sake of us, your old associates, for whom life would lose much of its lustre in losing you as a companion and friend. Live on for your own sake, that you may enjoy the better day of which your eye already catches the dawn. Where faith discerned the Saviour of the world, the unbeliever looked only on a man of sorrows, crowned with thorns, and tottering under the burden of the cross on which he was to die. The social skeptic sees America sitting apart in her affliction, stung by vipers at her bosom, and welcomed to the pit by "earth's ancient kings ;" but through all the anguish of her grief you teach us to behold her in immortal beauty, as she steps onward through trials to brighter

glory. Live to enjoy her coming triumph, when the acknowledged power of right shall tear the root of sorrow out of the heart of the country, and make her more than ever the guardian of human liberty and the regenerator of the race.

MR. BRYANT'S REPLY TO MR. BANCROFT.

I thank you, Mr. President, for the kind words you have uttered, and I thank this good-natured company for having listened to them with so many tokens of assent and approbation. I must suppose, however, that most of this approbation was bestowed upon the orator rather than upon his subject. He who has brought to the writing of our national history a genius equal to the vastness of the subject, has of course more than talent enough for humbler tasks. I wonder not, therefore, that he should be applauded this evening for the skill he has shown in embellishing a barren topic.

I am congratulated on having completed my seventieth year. Is there nothing ambiguous, Mr. President, in such a compliment? To be congratulated on one's senility! To be congratulated on having reached that stage of life when the bodily and mental powers pass into decline and decay! Lear is made by Shakespeare to say,

“Age is unnecessary;”

and a later poet, Dr. Johnson, has expressed the same idea in one of his sonorous lines:

“Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage.”

You have not forgotten, Mr. President, the old Greek saying:

“Whom the gods love die young,”—

nor the passage in Wordsworth :

—— “ Oh, fir, the good die firft,  
And they whose hearts are dry as summer duft,  
Burn to the socket.”

Much has been said of the wisdom of Old Age. Old Age is wise, I grant, for itself, but not wise for the community. It is wise in declining new enterprises, for it has not the power nor the time to execute them ; wise in shrinking from difficulty, for it has not the strength to overcome it ; wise in avoiding danger, for it lacks the faculty of ready and swift action, by which dangers are parried and converted into advantages. But this is not wisdom for mankind at large, by whom new enterprises must be undertaken, dangers met, and difficulties surmounted. What a world would this be if it were made up of old men!—generation succeeding generation of hoary ancients who had but a dozen years or perhaps half that time to live ! What new work of good would be attempted ? what existing abuse or evil corrected ? What strange subjects would such a world afford for the pencils of our artists—groups of superannuated gray-beards basking in the sun through the long days of spring, or huddling like sheep in warm corners in the winter time ; houses with the timbers dropping apart ; cities in ruins ; roads unwrought and impassable ; weedy gardens and fields with the surface feebly scratched to put in a scanty harvest—decrepit old men clambering into crazy wagons, perhaps to be run away with, or mounting horses, if they mounted them at all, in terror of being hurled from their backs like a sling from a stone. Well it is that in this world of ours the old men are but a very small minority.



Ah, Mr. President, if we could but stop this rushing tide of time that bears us so swiftly onward, and make it flow towards its source ; if we could cause the shadow to turn back on the dial-plate ! I see before me many excellent friends of mine, worthy to live a thousand years, on whose countenances years have set their seal, marking them with the lines of thought and care, and causing their temples to glisten with the frosts of life's autumn. If to any one of them could be restored his glorious prime, his golden youth, with its hyacinthine locks, its smooth, unwrinkled brow, its fresh and rounded cheek, its pearly and perfect teeth, its lustrous eyes, its light and bounding step, its frame full of energy, its exulting spirits, its high hopes, its generous impulses, and, added to all these, the experience and fixed principles of mature age, I am sure, Mr. President, that I should start at once to my feet and propose that in commemoration of such a marvel and by way of congratulating our friend who was its subject, we should hold such a festivity as the Century has never seen nor will ever see again. Eloquence should bring its highest tribute, and Art its fairest decorations to grace the festival ; the most skilful musicians should be here with all manner of instruments of music, ancient and modern ; we would have sackbut, and trumpet, and shawm, and damsels with dulcimers, and a modern band three times as large as the one that now plays on that balcony. But why dwell on such a vain dream, since it is only by passing through the darkness that overhangs the Valley of the Shadow of Death that man can reach his second youth ?

I have read, in descriptions of the old world, of the families of princes and barons coming out of their castles to be present at some rustic festivity, such as a wedding of one of their peasantry.

I am reminded of this custom by the presence of many literary persons of eminence in these rooms, and I thank them for this act of benevolence. Yet I miss among them several whom I had wished rather than ventured to hope that I should meet on this occasion. I miss my old friend Dana, who gave so grandly the story of the Buccaneer in his solemn verses. I miss Pierpont, venerable in years, yet vigorous in mind and body, and with an undimmed fancy ; and him whose pages are wet with the tears of maidens who read the story of Evangeline ; and the author of Fanny and the Croakers, no less renowned for the fiery spirit which animated his Marco Bozzaris ; and him to whose wit we owe the Biglow Papers, who has made a lowly flower of the wayside as classical as the rose of Anacreon ; and the Quaker poet, whose verses, Quaker as he is, stir the blood like the voice of a trumpet calling to battle ; and the poetess of Hartford, whose beautiful lyrics are in a million hands, and others, whose names, were they to occur to me here as in my study, I might accompany with the mention of some characteristic merit. But here is he whose ærial verse has raised the little insect of our fields making his murmuring journey from flower to flower, the humble-bee, to a dignity equal to that of Pindar's eagle ; here is the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table—author of that most spirited of naval lyrics, beginning with the line :

“Aye, tear her tattered ensign down!”

here, too, is the poet who told in pathetic verse the story of Jephtha's daughter, and here are others, worthy compeers of those I have mentioned, yet greatly my juniors, in the brightness of whose rising fame I am like one who has carried a lantern in the

night, and who perceives that its beams are no longer visible in the glory which the morning pours around him. To them and to all the members of the Century, allow me, Mr. President, to offer the wish that they may live longer than I have done, in health of body and mind, and in the same contentment and serenity of spirit which has fallen to my lot. I must not overlook the ladies who have deigned to honor these rooms with their presence. If I knew where, amid myrtle bowers and flowers that never wither, gushed from the ground the Fountain of Perpetual Youth so long vainly sought by the first Spanish adventurers on the North American continent, I would offer to the lips of every one of them a beaker of its fresh and sparkling waters, and bid them drink unfading bloom. But since that is not to be, I will wish what, perhaps, is as well, and what some would think better, that the same kindness of heart which has prompted them to come hither to-night, may lend a beauty to every action of their future lives. And to "the Century" itself—the dear old Century—to whose members I owe both the honors and the embarrassments of this occasion—to that association, fortunate in having possessed two such presidents as the distinguished historian, who now occupies the chair, and the eminent and accomplished scholar and admirable writer who preceded him, I offer the wish that it may endure, not only for the term of years signified by its name—not for one century only, but for ten centuries—so that hereafter, perhaps, its members may discuss the question whether its name should not be changed to that of the Club of a Thousand Years, and that these may be centuries of peace and prosperity, from which its members may look back to this period of bloody strife, as to a frightful dream soon chased away by the beams of a glorious morning.

No sooner had the applause which attended and followed Mr. Bryant's remarks subsided, than choristers in the balcony struck up a chant for his birthday, by **BAYARD TAYLOR** :

## I.

One hour be silent, sounds of war !  
 Delay the battle he foretold,  
 And let the bard's triumphant star  
 Pour down from Heaven its mildest gold.

## II.

Let Fame, that plucks but laurel now  
 For loyal heroes, turn away,  
 And twine, to crown her poet's brow,  
 The greener garland of the bay.

## III.

For he, our earliest minstrel, fills  
 The land with echoes, sweet and long,  
 Gives language to her silent hills,  
 And bids her rivers move to song.

## IV.

The Phosphor of the Nation's dawn,  
 Sole-risen above our tuneless coast,  
 As Hesper, now, his lamp burns on—  
 The leader of the starry host.

## v.

He sings of mountains and of streams,  
 Of storied field and haunted dale,  
 Yet hears a voice through all his dreams,  
 Which says, "The Good shall yet prevail."

## vi.

He sings of Truth, he sings of Right ;  
 He sings of Freedom, and his strains  
 March with our armies to the fight,  
 Ring in the bondman's falling chains.

## vii.

God, bid him live, till in her place  
 Truth, crushed to earth, again shall rise—  
 The "mother of a mighty race,"  
 Fulfil her poet's prophecies.

The most venerable of American poets would have next  
 been looked to ; his absence was explained by

MR. RICHARD H. DANA'S LETTER TO "THE CENTURY."

GENTLEMEN :

I was much gratified upon seeing in the papers that "The Century" would keep the day on which my old friend Mr. Bryant is to take his place among the septuagenarians : may he live to be numbered with the next "upper ten." I am sorry, that, being within a very few years of the latter class, and feeling the touch



of infirmities, it will be out of my power to take advantage of the invitation so kindly extended to me. It is good for us to give honour where it is due ; and it would be cheering to me to pay it to one who has done so much to throw beauty over our common life. As it is, I must be content at home with setting apart the time of your meeting together to thinking upon what you are all enjoying, and to going over by myself the many years to which our friend has added so much to gladden a protracted life.

The letter having been read, the President introduced a representative of New England :

MR. RALPH WALDO EMERSON'S REMARKS.

MR. PRESIDENT :

Whilst I am grateful to you and to "The Century" for the privilege of joining you in this graceful and most deserved homage to our poet, I am a little disconcerted, in the absence of some expected friends from the Bay State, at finding myself put forward to speak on their part. Let me say for them that we have a property in his genius and virtue. Whilst we delight in your love of him, and in his power and reputation in your imperial State, we can never forget that he was born on the soil of Massachusetts. Your great metropolis is always, by some immense attraction of gravity, drawing to itself our best men. But we forgive you in this case the robbery, when we see how nobly you have used him. Moreover, the joint possession by New York and Massachusetts of him, and of others in this great circle of his friends, is one of

those ethereal hoops which bind these States inseparably in these perilous times.

I join with all my heart in your wish to honour this native, sincere, original, patriotic poet. I say original: I have heard him charged with being of a certain school. I heard it with surprise, and asked, what school? for he never reminded me of Goldsmith, or Wordsworth, or Byron, or Moore. I found him always original, a true painter of the face of this country, and of the sentiment of his own people. When I read the verses of popular American and English poets, I often think that they appear to have gone into the Art Galleries and to have seen pictures of mountains, but this man to have seen mountains. With his stout staff he has climbed Greylock and the White Hills, and sung what he saw. He renders Berkshire to me in verse, with the sober coloring, too, to which nature cleaves, only now and then permitting herself the scarlet and gold of the prism. It is his proper praise, that he first and he only made known to mankind our northern landscape—its summer splendor, its autumn russet, its winter lights and glooms. And he is original because he is sincere. Many young men write verse which strikes by talent, but the writer has not committed himself, the man is not there, it is written at arm's length, he could as well have written on any other theme: it was not necessitated and autobiographic, and therefore it does not imprint itself on the memory, and return for thought and consolation in our solitary hours. But our friend's inspiration is from the inmost mind; he has not a labial but a chest voice, and you shall detect the tastes and experiences of the poem in his daily life.

Like other poets—more than other poets—with his expanding genius his ambition grew. Fountain-heads and pathless groves did

not content him. It is a national sin. There is, you know, an optical distemper endemic in the City of Washington, contracted by Senators and others who once look at the President's chair; their eyes grow to it; they can never again take their eyes off it. The virus once in is not to be got out of the system. Our friend had not this malady, but has symptoms of another,

“That last infirmity of noble minds.”

Ah, gentlemen! so cold and majestic as he sits here, I fear this sin burned at his heart—well hid, I own; never was man more modest, less boastful, less egotistical. But you remember that wicked Phidias, who, after making his divine Minerva, carved his own image with such deep incision into the shield, that it could not be effaced without destroying the statue. But this artist of ours, with deeper cunning, has contrived to levy on all American nature, has subsidized every solitary grove and monument-mountain in Berkshire or the Katskills, every gleaming water, the “gardens of the Desert,” every waterfowl and woodbird, the evening wind, the stormy March, the song of the stars;—has suborned every one of these to speak for him, so that there is no feature of day or night in the country which does not, to a contemplative mind, recall the name of Bryant. This high-handed usurpation of whatever is sweet or sublime, I charge him with, and, on the top of this, with the sorcery of making us hug our fetters and rejoice in our subjugation.

Then, sir, for his patriotism—we all know the deep debt which the country owes to the accomplished journalist, who, the better to carry the ends which his heart desired, left the studies and retirements dear to his muse, adapted his voice to the masses to be



reached, and the great cause to be sustained—was content to drop “the garland and finging-robcs of the poet,” and, masking his Tyrtæan elegies in the plain speech of the street, sounded the key-note of policy and public duty to the American people, in a manner and with an effect of the highest service to the Republic.

Before I sit down, let me apply to him a verse addressed by Thomas Moore to the poet Crabbe, and Moore has written few better :

“ True bard, and simple as the race  
Of heaven-born poets always are,  
When stooping from their starry place,  
They’re children near, but gods afar.”

The audience listened with hearty approval to the generous tribute from one man of genius to another. From all parts of the country representatives were present. The platform was next taken by a representative of Pennsylvania, who did but embody the sentiments and wishes of all around him.

## BRYANT.

*November 5th, 1864.*

BY GEORGE H. BOKER.

With timid steps, as one who enters in  
A solemn temple from the city’s din,  
And hears behind the mighty portals close  
Upon the world’s long chase of joys and woes ;

And half forgets his mission, through intense  
 Awe at the chancel's calm magnificence :  
 So I, a stranger with a recent name—  
 More on the people's than the lips of fame—  
 In this august assemblage faltering stand,  
 And doubt the right I use by your command.  
 Behold the temple that around me lies,  
 A growth of earth, but swelling to the skies ;  
 Raised in a night, that he who fills the shrine,  
 Founder and glory of our tuneful line,  
 May hold the state his genius owns by right,  
 And claim our homage in the nation's sight.  
 What prouder pile was ever built by hands  
 Than that which fancy, as her eye expands,  
 Shapes from this mass of noble forms and minds,  
 Builds as she broods, and in one structure binds ?  
 I see before me, clustered side by side,  
 The stateliest columns of my country's pride,—  
 Poets, historians, and those whose art  
 Makes fiction truth, and gives to shadows heart.  
 A storied frieze their laureled brows uphold,  
 Enriched with legends grand and manifold ;  
 Or glowing with that quiet hearth-side light  
 Which makes the homeliest face beloved and bright.  
 To right and left, wide chapels flash their store  
 Of painted wonders from the walls, and pour  
 A flood of glory on each hand that wrought  
 Its new creation from exhaustless thought.  
 Here rest the sculptured shapes that never know

A mortal touch to passion's ebb or flow.  
 Calm in their deathless grace and changeless mood,  
 They front their fate with godlike fortitude,  
 Or breathe their love in ever-listening ears,  
 Or drop in sorrow their eternal tears ;  
 Kneel at a tomb whence human grief has fled,  
 And pray to Heaven for man's forgotten dead.  
 Shall I, half trembling at the thing I do,  
 Speak of the windows, whence the light shines through  
 Upon this world of art ? O critics keen,  
 Your lucid minds give splendor to the scene ;  
 You are the medium of the heavenly rays ;  
 Groups, pictures, poems kindle in your blaze.  
 Without your aid we see no art aright ;  
 But is't not sometimes party-coloured light  
 That flames upon us from your tinted panes,  
 And haply glorifies, or haply stains ?  
 I shall not ask. The marvel of the roof,  
 That crowns this temple draws my eyes aloof.  
 Wide as God's azure vault it spreads above,  
 A perfect dome of man's triumphant love ;  
 And all the vastness of its cloudless cope  
 Burns with the stars of memory and of hope.  
 Such is your temple, Bryant ! Do I strain  
 The figure farther than the facts sustain ?  
 Look on the neighbouring groups, ye doubting few,  
 And own yourselves convicted at the view.  
 To me the sight of those assembled here  
 Will be a wonder till my latest year.

My memory holds no picture in its round  
 So pure in aim, in justice so profound,  
 So free from any passion that might taint  
 The holiest scene man's cunning art could paint ;  
 Nor can I hope, outliving Nestor's years,  
 To see again these intellectual peers  
 Marshal their ranks, to honour any chief  
 With joy's acclaims, or with the tears of grief.  
 'T were vain in me to ape great Homer's plan,  
 And give his title to each noted man.  
 Why should I echo an illustrious name,  
 Already sounding from the lips of Fame ?  
 Or like a wren, my twittering notes prolong  
 Amidst these sky-larks of our native song ?  
 Thus much however ; what the wren may owe  
 The morning's laureate, I am proud to show.  
 Great Master of my Country's earnest lyre,  
 What heart so humble that cannot aspire  
 With grateful pride, to feel itself the while  
 Blessed by the bounty of your generous smile ?  
 To know, though vexed with doubts and crossed with fears,  
 That from the audience Bryant bends and hears ;  
 And in the largess of his patient heart,  
 Takes the intention as the deed's best part ?  
 Why should I tremble, holding by the hand  
 That led my youth across his wondrous land ?  
 Through every feeling that can move the mind,  
 Through noisy joy, through sorrow dumb and blind,  
 Through the cool ways of philosophic thought,

Over the fields where bloody frays were fought,  
 Into the silence of the forest nook,  
 Down the green pathway of the primrose brook,  
 By God's own gardens in the meadows sown,  
 Around the prairie's sky-encompassed zone,  
 Across the fiery steps of dying day,  
 Where the lone wild-fowl winged his fearless way,  
 Up to the peaks that bury in the sun  
 Their golden foreheads, where the bright stars run  
 Their silver circle round the frozen pole,  
 And through the mysteries of man's solemn soul,  
 O Bryant, partner of my path and guide,  
 We two have journeyed onward side by side.  
 Yours was the realm. At your imperial look  
 The dew-drop glittered and the gentian shook,  
 The circling swallow dipped his restless wings,  
 The feathered conclave perched in silent rings,  
 The furry beast came purring to your feet,  
 All Nature bowed before your sovereign seat.  
 Crowned with the laurel, sceptred with the lyre,  
 Sage with the secrets of its magic wire ;  
 Wearing the purple by a right divine,  
 That shamed the claimants of the haughtiest line ;  
 Amongst the votaries of your throne I stood  
 With regal longings stirring in my blood.  
 Blame not a boy, if I essayed ere long  
 To catch the key-note of your matchless song.  
 Failed at the first, as at this latest hour,  
 But, failing, learned the mystery of your power.

Hearken, ye bards who err by rigid rules,  
 And wear the tawdry livery of the schools ;  
 Who strive to shine as other lights have shone,  
 And envying others, forfeit what's your own !  
 Write, as he wrote, with honest, simple pains,  
 Out of the seeds God planted in your brains,  
 Out of the fulness of your nation's heart,  
 Nor vex the dead with imitative art ;  
 Nor cross the natural limit of the seas,  
 To seek a strength that fills our stronger breeze.  
 For were the copy as the first mould cast,—  
 Out on the thing ! a copy 'tis at last !  
 By mere descent no poet shall be known ;  
 Each royal minstrel holds his separate throne,  
 And o'er his state a seraph's brand is whirled :  
 One Milton is enough for any world.  
 Poet revered, you taught this lesson first,  
 As from the bondage of the schools you burst,  
 And filled our startled but delighted sense  
 With our wide land's discovered affluence ;  
 Gave the scorned legends of our narrow past  
 Another colour and more graceful cast ;  
 Touched the wild flowers beneath our lucid skies,  
 And shook their glimmer in the dreamer's eyes ;  
 Made history light upon unstoried hills,  
 And breathed a voice along our savage rills ;  
 Spread over all the haze of fresh romance,  
 Till Europe wondered through her doubting glance ;  
 But wondered more that every tone rang out



The clarion challenge of a freeman's shout ;  
 Sounding defiance to their castes and kings,  
 Their courtly follies over empty things ;  
 But, O my Bryant, tempered sweet and low,  
 To tenderest pity, was your music's flow  
 Over the trampled serfs that raised their groans  
 Beneath the shadows of resplendent thrones.  
 Warm was the welcome of the hand you gave  
 Across our threshold to the fleeing slave ;  
 And stern the courage of your angry frown,  
 When tyrants raged for what they called their own.  
 You were the first who made us clearly see,  
 In rhythmic words, how grand 'tis to be free ;  
 Sang to the world the spirit of our land,  
 And waved her standard from your spotless hand ;  
 Taught every child the glory of his birth,  
 And spread his heritage around the earth ;  
 Made youth feel stronger, that his life began  
 Here in the front of freedom's hardy van ;  
 Consoled the sage against foreboding fears,  
 And starred with hopes the shadows of his years.  
 Two lives the poet lives, 'tis said. In you  
 Both gently mingle in a man so true  
 To the pure instincts of his sacred gift,  
 That slander's self can point no adverse drift.  
 Whether the subtle rhetoric of your pen  
 In prose or verse address itself to men,  
 Or the convincing logic of your tongue,  
 With which the rostrums of the State have rung,

Be raised in counsel ; who will dare to say  
 They passed truth's landmarks for a novel way ;  
 Or ranged themselves, in peace or open fight,  
 On any side but on the side of right ?  
 So well the man becomes the poet's crown,  
 That each gives each a measure of renown ;  
 Imbue each other, form a perfect whole,  
 And top our race with one exalted soul.  
 Let me no longer try the public ear  
 With what men knew before they entered here ;  
 Or mar your title with my tedious lines,  
 And breathe a mist upon a thing that shines.  
 We hail you, poet, with our greeting shout ;  
 From this thronged hall the cry goes rolling out  
 Above the city, that takes up the sound,  
 And spreads the welcome to the country round.  
 Each fruitful valley and each echoing hill,  
 That feel the touch of your fame-giving will,  
 Wake as the tones slide down the happy gales,  
 To wave our flag, or fill our swelling sails.  
 The dew-beads twinkle, and the wild-flowers nod ;  
 The robins carol from the tawny sod ;  
 The slave turns lightly in his galling chain,  
 Prays low, then dreams of liberty again.  
 Nature and man repeat the mystic thrill,  
 That proved the power of the magician's skill,  
 When, as a youth, you struck your country's lyre,  
 And filled its pauses with your spirit's fire.  
 Long may the years that hear your powerful rhyme,



Stretch out your life along the coming time !  
 We hear no discord, nothing of decay  
 In the fresh music of your latest lay.  
 Youth nerves the poet ; why may not the man  
 Leave far behind the Psalmist's fated span ;  
 Like a pure tone, his purer life prolong,  
 Live with the life of his immortal song ?  
 God grant it, Bryant ! I have not a prayer  
 That would not clamber up the heavenly air,  
 To kneel before the splendor of the Throne,  
 If thus another blessing could be sown  
 In the fair garden of your blooming days,  
 Already fragrant with a nation's praise,  
 Bright with the wreaths the total world hath given,  
 And warm with love that's sanctified by Heaven.

The great West sent an honored artist and poet, who travelled eight hundred miles by night and day, to appear in its behalf ; and these are the stanzas in which he expressed the spirit of those from whom he came :

## TO BRYANT.

BY THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.

What time I ope, with reverential love,  
 One of the charméd volumes of my choice,  
 I hear, as in the cloisters of the grove,  
 The solemn music of thy Druid voice.

All fights and sounds that can delight impart,  
 Or whatsoe'er athwart thy vision swims,  
 Before the altar of the world's great heart,  
 Thou nobly breathest in undying hymns.

For thy broad love there is no flower too small,  
 Nor scene too vast for thy encircling mind ;  
 Thy heart is one with Nature's, yet o'er all  
 Rises its sweet vibration for mankind.

The faintest breath that finds a flowery nook,  
 The flying winds with wise and gust-like locks,  
 The pebble which the lapidary brook  
 Rounds into form—or ocean-scorning rocks ;

The burnished blue-bird, with his spring-time song,  
 The azure-winged runnel's April call ;  
 The timid wren, the falcon fierce and strong,  
 The soaring water-fowl, the swooping fall ;

The glow-worm's lantern and the lunar car,  
 The midnight taper and the noonday sun,  
 The pool where swims the lily like a star,  
 The boundless sea, with lily sails o'errun ;

The brooklet blade the lightest wavelet moves,  
 Where childhood's paper sails are set unfurled,  
 The antique home of shade, the oaken groves,  
 Growing the ponderous navies of the world ;

The peaceful hearthstone and the roaring field,  
 The song-bird and our eagle on his crag,  
 The love of all that quiet home can yield,  
 The love of country, freedom, and her flag ;

All these are thine, thou pioneer of song,  
 Bard of the prairie and primeval grove,  
 And unto thee our praise may well belong—  
 Yea, more than praise—the homage of our love.

And this is thine, and therefore I obey,  
 And bow before thy Druid locks of snow,  
 And on thy sacred altar here I lay  
 My votive branch of western mistletoe.

From the British Provinces there was received an assurance that the Saint Lawrence cannot set bounds to the friendly recognition of merit.

EXTRACT OF A GREETING FROM CANADA TO WILLIAM CULLEN  
 BRYANT ON HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY.

All honor to the lyric few  
 Of every land and nation,  
 The tuneful throng whose souls of song  
 Are deeps of inspiration.  
 O ! sad old world, where were thy boast  
 Unless these struck the lyre !

Thou had'st no mental Pentecost  
 But for their tongues of fire.  
 The sacred oracles of God  
 Each heaven-transmitted token,  
 The inspired word in visions heard,  
 Through poet-souls were spoken.  
 All honor, then, ye men of men,  
 In Bardic love assembled,  
 Whose truths have flown from zone to zone,  
 While error paused and trembled.  
 Columbia's boast ! her lark-like host,  
 In lyric strength reliant,  
 Their carcanet of lays would set  
 Around the name of Bryant.  
 And well they may ; each loving lay,  
 Thrice-earned, is his in duty ;  
 For who so well hath tuned the shell  
 To nature's worth and beauty !  
 His burning lyre, his heart on fire  
 With passion true and fervent ;  
 A soul to feel for woe or weal !  
 Truth's champion, priest, and servant.  
 To sterling worth their hearts go forth,  
 Vieing with one another ;  
 With eager feet they come to greet  
 Their patriarchal brother.  
 No rival stands with folded hands,  
 But with one voice compliant,

The gifted throng, each heir of song,  
 Rings out the fame of Bryant.  
 Here e'en as there, our hearts can share  
 The greetings flung before him ;  
 In love to-day we're rich as they  
 Who shed their halos o'er him.

CHARLES SANGSTER.

KINGSTON, CANADA WEST.

It had been hoped that the great people from whom we inherit the best language ever used by man, since that of Homer and Plato died away, would have been represented at the festival by one who has a singular command of that language in its richness, delicacy, and strength. The President could only produce an

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM MR. GOLDWIN SMITH.

“ I am sincerely sorry to miss the opportunity of taking part in any tribute of respect to Mr. Bryant. I beg you will assure him of this, and wish him joy, in my name, of the public gratitude which crowns his bright and honorable career.”

The admirers of the best poetry are not confined to men. Offerings, voluntary, or in response to invitations, were received from the other sex.

EXTRACT FROM MISS C. M. SEDGWICK'S LETTER TO W. J. HOPPIN.

"WOODBOURNE (near Boston), October 31st, 1864.

"It is one of the severest of my privations that ill-health compels me to decline the very gratifying invitation from the Century. No one could participate more earnestly than myself in an honor rendered to my friend Mr. Bryant, to whose genius my heart has given homage from its first budding to the ripening of its fruits in their present sweetness and immortal perfection. To this homage is added the reverence due to his character, and to the patriotic service he has done for his country in keeping the fire brightly burning in his watch-tower through all its weal and woe. I am happy in believing that some of the members of 'The Century' will be glad to know that they have enriched me with pleasant memories which, in some sort, console me for my enforced absence from the coming celebration. There are lights and consolations for the dimmed hours never perceived or known till they come.

"Believe me, my dear Mr. Hoppin, gratefully yours,

"C. M. SEDGWICK."

TO WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT,

*With a blossom of EDELWEISS, from the Swiss Alps, eleven thousand feet above the level of the sea.*

BY MARY H. C. BOOTH, OF WISCONSIN.

Not from the cultured gardens,  
And not from the daïsied sod,

Do I bring my little offering,  
 But down from the hills of God.  
 Down from the crystal mountains,  
 Where never a flower was sown,  
 Save the flower that God has planted,  
 In sight of the Great White Throne.

From over the nests of the eagles  
 And under the Angels' feet,  
 Where the opal airs of summer  
 And the winds of winter meet,  
 A flower I bring, an offering  
 From the snow hill's silver crest.  
 And leave sweet songs and silver crowns  
 And earth flowers for the rest.

The Alpine hunters tell us  
 That, when a Poet dies,  
 God meets him at the Golden Gate  
 Crowned with the *Edelweiss*;  
 But only those who worshipped Him  
 In fingering nature's praise,  
 And walked beside Him on the hills  
 And through Life's lonely ways.

Oh King of nature's songsters !  
 And thus I bring to thee  
 This blossom, from the Alpine hills,  
 The glorious and free,



That, when the Angels bid thee pause  
 Where oft thy soul hath trod,  
 To crown thee on the mountain tops,  
 Upon thy way to God—

Thou then may'st recognise the flower  
 As one, while yet below  
 And walking in the earthly ways,  
 Thou yet had'st learned to know.  
 Thus, from no cultured garden,  
 And not from the daified sod,  
 Do I bring my little offering,  
 But down from the hills of God.

NOVEMBER 5th, 1864.

A beautiful wreath composed of natural flowers, white lilies, amaranths, and red roses, intermixed with myrtle and bay, was sent to Mr. Bryant by an unknown lady, with a copy of verses in his honor, which she described as

“Simple blossoms of the soul  
 Budding forth without control.”

Mrs. Sigourney reluctantly resigned the “opportunity of paying respect to one whose high and pure poetical genius has rendered his name illustrious in our country and the world;” and contributed the following stanzas:



THE SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY OF WILLIAM  
CULLEN BRYANT.

BY L. HUNTLEY SIGOURNEY.

Honor to him, the loved of all,  
The master of our Western lyre !  
Who o'er his country's heart hath thrown  
The melody with which his own  
Hath ever dwelt, shaping its tone,  
To heavenly choir.

Honor to him whose early years  
The old Homeric fire displayed,  
And now to Wisdom's ripened truth  
Hath brought the sunbeams of his youth,  
Without a shade.

All hail to him, whose genial strain  
Nor bitterness nor satire knew,  
But from the charms of Nature's face  
And virtue's dignity and grace  
Its impulse drew.

All hail ! and still through lengthened days  
May his pure thoughts unsullied flow,  
And in the alembic of the mind,  
Mingling like molten gold refined,  
Through future ages on mankind  
Their wealth bestow.

The assembly was becoming impatient to hear the voice of a gifted woman, a native of New York City, who was present. The President, following their intimation, led her to the platform, where she recited a poem.

## A LEAF FROM THE BRYANT CHAPLET.

BY JULIA WARD HOWE.

Friends who greet the crownéd Poet, who detain the passing year  
With the love that knows no passing, I attend your summons here.  
Had ye suffered me in silence, I had thanked your courteous grace,  
Happier yet, in rites so cordial, to have utterance and place.

In your city rows palatial has a mansion stood apart,  
Not in aspect nor pretension, single in its saintly heart ;  
When the tides of greed and traffic swept the limits of the town,  
'Twas a citadel of virtue and a shrine of pure renown.

There the Muse that knew Anacreon, that made Roman Horace  
great,  
Shunning Cæsar's jewelled favors, at the modest fireside sate,  
Lit the wintry coals with splendor, turned the deep historic page,  
Held the burning lamp of Fancy to the problems of the age ;

When the great ideas came singly to the crowded market-place,  
Looking wanly for a welcome in each money-getting face,  
And the high police of fashion urged the vagrants to give room,  
They, our Chief of song encountering, grew speedily at home.

He had many a measure for us ; at his forge he wrought two-fold,  
 On the iron shield of Freedom, and the poet's links of gold.  
 All the while a song was fingering, others better knew than he,  
 For the even stanzas of his life made subtlest melody.

He was a veteran leader ere his forehead gained its snows ;  
 And still before the pilgrim flock his silver summons goes.  
 No wild and desert waste he brings, with lurid day and night,  
 But pastures of serenity, and founts of clear delight.

We have journeyed far to praise him, let us also praise the hour,  
 For the travail throes of Conscience, and the newest birth of  
                   power ;

Let us praise the faultless victims, and the living who have bent  
 O'er the wealth of Nature ravished, with a terrible consent.

For sorrow from the city to the martial camp has fled,  
 To hunt, with her funereal torch, the features of the dead.  
 Another and another son the fatal sheaf doth bind,  
 But nothing of the thoughts of God, or hope of human kind.

Resurrection in the valley ! Resurrection on the shore !  
 When great Justice is established, we shall have our own once  
                   more ;

Not like us, unfixed, inconstant in our issues great and small,  
 But a phalanx set in marble for the future's judgment call.

Long remain the noble Poet, priceless hostage of our love !  
 Vainly floats the wingéd message from the banquet halls of Jove,

Vainly voices from Valhalla name the champion of the free ;  
He has pæans yet to utter, he must crown our victory.

When the moment comes to claim him, that must come to claim  
us all,

Hearts that cherish human longings will be darkened by his fall ;  
But immortal Truth shall welcome her adorer to her breast,  
Saying : " Things are changed between us now ; on earth I was  
thy guest."

As she ended, her charmed hearers were still listening to  
her words, pronounced in exquisitely musical tones, when  
Mr. Cranch handed to the President a letter for Mr. Bryant,  
which was read before delivery.

CENTURY ROOMS, NEW YORK, *Nov.* 1, 1864.

DEAR SIR :

At a meeting of the Artist-members of the Century, it was  
agreed that some simple but appropriate testimonial of the honor  
and esteem in which you are held among us, ought to be presented  
by us to you, on your 70th birthday. On this festive occasion,  
when the Century steps forward to honor the Patriot and Poet  
who has so long and faithfully served his country in his verse  
and in the columns of his Journal, we, too, wish to express our  
consideration of the sympathy you have ever manifested towards  
the Artists, and the high rank you have ever accorded to art. Be  
assured, dear Sir, that the tribute of our love and admiration is not  
formal, but cordial. And as we are accustomed neither to speech-

making nor to elaborate letter-writing, we desire that the few words we have to say, may be said not to you only, but to the friends who will gather here to greet you on your birthday.

We ask you then, dear Sir, to accept from the Artist-members of the Century, a portfolio of Sketches, knowing no more expressive form of testifying to you the sentiments with which we shall meet you on the evening of your approaching anniversary.

We have the honor to be, in behalf of the Artists, the Committee,

DANIEL HUNTINGTON,  
 ASHER B. DURAND,  
 CHRISTOPHER P. CRANCH.

The artists are the heart of the Century ; as soon as the letter was read, the crowded company opened a passage, and a portfolio was brought in, mounted on a stand of the nicest workmanship, and made to contain finished sketches by the members, whose names follow :

EUGENE BENSON,  
 ALBERT BIERSTADT,  
 CARL BRANDT,  
 H. R. BROWN,  
 FREDERICK E. CHURCH,  
 SAMUEL COLMAN,  
 CHRISTOPHER P. CRANCH,  
 JASPER P. CROPSY,  
 W. P. W. DANA,

FELIX O. C. DARLEY,  
 A. B. DURAND,  
 C. D. GAMBRILL,  
 S. R. GIFFORD,  
 REGIS GIGNOUX,  
 HENRY PETERS GRAY,  
 GEORGE H. HALL,  
 W. J. HAYS,  
 WILLIAM HAZELTINE,

W. J. HENNESSY,  
 THOMAS HICKS,  
 DANIEL HUNTINGTON,  
 EASTMAN JOHNSON,  
 JOHN F. KENSETT,  
 EDWARD I. KUNTZE,  
 JOHN LA FARGE,  
 LOUIS LANG,  
 THOMAS LE CLEAR,  
 E. LEUTZE,  
 H. A. LOOP,  
 JERVIS MCENTEE,

E. D. NELSON,  
 RICHARD H. PARK,  
 H. W. ROBBINS,  
 RICHARD M. STAIGG,  
 J. B. STEARNS,  
 WILLIAM OLIVER STONE,  
 JAMES A. SUYDAM,  
 BAYARD TAYLOR,  
 LAUNT THOMPSON,  
 ELIPHALET TERRY,  
 CALVERT VAUX,  
 J. Q. A. WARD,

WILLIAM WHITTREDGE.

At the same moment, Mr. Daniel Huntington, President of the National Academy of Design, stepped upon the platform, and addressed his friend of many years.

#### REMARKS OF MR. HUNTINGTON.

Honored and beloved Poet: The artists of this club have entrusted me with the privilege of presenting to you this collection of sketches, in token of their love and admiration. A beautiful stand and portfolio have been added through the liberality of several amateur members. There is an illustrious artist, whose name, like your own, is imperishably traced in the interwoven story of our art and literature, who, from his intimate relations with you,



as well as from his long acknowledged leadership in our profession, is entitled to the honor of acting for us on this occasion; but Durand is absent or silent, and therefore I have the pleasure, in his name, and in behalf of all the artists, of greeting you to-night as one of their own body. Indeed, Sir, the artists love you very much, and you know it; we claim you as one of us, remembering that you were one of the original members of the old Sketch Club, and a member and founder of the National Academy of Design—a brother of the pencil most dear to all our hearts. The sketches for the portfolio have not all been finished, owing to the shortness of the time, the late return of many from their autumn haunts, and their desire to make their offerings worthy of their purpose. Such a labor of love will not be slightly done, and when soon it shall be completed, it will be marked by the warm affection and deep reverence we feel for our poet-brother in the divine art.

Of the vast multitudes who, with ever-growing delight, bend over your pages, or of those more familiar friends who have met here to do you honor, there are none whose hearts glow with deeper joy and pride than do those of the artists who to-night take part in this festival solemnity. For many years, by mountain and stream, and in the stillness of the studio, we have been cheered by your vivid pictures of American scenery, and inspired by your songs of human freedom, and we pray that God may grant you yet many years to charm our hearts with new images of truth and beauty; and when this dark and bloody war-cloud shall have passed forever, in the serene evening of your life, to sing for our whole people the cradle-song of a new-born American Liberty.

## MR. BRYANT ANSWERED :

Allow me, through you, as one of their representatives, to return to the artists of the Century my best acknowledgments for the superb gift they have made me. I have no title to it but their generosity, yet I rejoice to possess it, and shall endeavor to preserve it as long as I live.

Among the artists of our country are some of my oldest and best friends. In their conversation I have taken great delight, and derived from it much instruction. In them the love and the study of nature tend to preserve the native simplicity of character, to make them frank and ingenuous and to divert their attention from selfish interests. I shall prize this gift, therefore, not only as a memorial of the genius of our artists, in which respect alone it possesses a high value, but also as a token of the good will of a class of men for whom I cherish a particular regard and esteem.

This very interesting interlude was watched with the most marked sympathy by the numerous audience, who were especially touched by the sincere and simple words: "the artists love you, and you know it." The East, the West, the South, had given expression to their sentiments; so soon as Mr. Huntington stepped down, the President introduced him who was to speak for the whole country, for its one people, and its full constellation of States.

## BRYANT'S SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

O even-handed Nature ! we confess  
 This life that men so honor, love, and bless,  
 Has filled thine olden measure. Not the less

We count the precious seasons that remain ;  
 Strike not the level of the golden grain,  
 But heap it high with years, that earth may gain

What heaven can lose,—for heaven is rich in song :  
 Do not all poets, dying, still prolong  
 Their broken chants amid the seraph throng,

Where, blind no more, Ionia's bard is seen,  
 And England's heavenly minstrel fits between  
 The Mantuan and the wan-cheeked Florentine ?

This was the first sweet finger in the cage  
 Of our close-woven life. A new-born age  
 Claims in his vesper song its heritage :

Spare us, oh spare us long our heart's desire !  
 Moloch, who calls our children through the fire,  
 Leaves us the gentle master of the lyre.

We count not on the dial of the sun  
 The hours, the minutes, that his sands have run ;  
 Rather, as on those flowers that one by one

From earliest dawn their ordered bloom display  
 Till evening's planet with her guiding ray  
 Leads in the blind old mother of the day,

We reckon by his songs, each song a flower,  
 The long, long daylight, numbering hour by hour,  
 Each breathing sweetness like a bridal bower.

His morning glory shall we e'er forget?  
 His noon-tide's full-blown lily coronet?  
 His evening primrose has not opened yet;

Nay, even if creeping Time should hide the skies  
 In midnight from his century-laden eyes,  
 Darkened like his who sang of Paradise,

Would not some hidden song-bud open bright  
 As the resplendent cactus of the night  
 That floods the gloom with fragrance and with light?

How can we praise the verse whose music flows  
 With solemn cadence and majestic close,  
 Pure as the dew that filters through the rose?

How shall we thank him that in evil days  
 He faltered never,—nor for blame, nor praise,  
 Nor hire, nor party, shamed his earlier lays?

But as his boyhood was of manliest hue,  
 So to his youth his manly years were true,  
 All dyed in royal purple through and through!

He for whose touch the lyre of Heaven is strung  
Needs not the flattering toil of mortal tongue :  
Let not the finger grieve to die unsung !

Marbles forget their message to mankind :  
In his own verse the poet still we find,  
In his own page his memory lives enshrined,

As in their amber sweets the smothered bees,—  
As the fair cedar, fallen before the breeze,  
Lies self-embalmed amidst the mouldering trees.

Poets, like youngest children, never grow  
Out of their mother's fondness. Nature so  
Holds their soft hands, and will not let them go,

Till at the last they track with even feet  
Her rhythmic footsteps, and their pulses beat  
Twinned with her pulses, and their lips repeat

The secrets she has told them, as their own :  
Thus is the inmost soul of Nature known,  
And the rapt minstrel shares her awful throne !

O lover of her mountains and her woods,  
Her bridal chamber's leafy solitudes,  
Where Love himself with tremulous step intrudes,

Her snows fall harmless on thy sacred fire :  
Far be the day that claims thy sounding lyre  
To join the music of the angel choir !

Yet, since life's amplest measure must be filled,  
 Since throbbing hearts must be forever stilled,  
 And all must fade that evening sunsets gild,

Grant, Father, ere he close the mortal eyes  
 That see a Nation's reeking sacrifice,  
 Its smoke may vanish from these blackened skies !

Then, when his summons comes, since come it must,  
 And, looking heavenward with unfaltering trust,  
 He wraps his drapery round him for the dust,

His last fond glance will show him o'er his head  
 The Northern fires beyond the zenith spread  
 In lambent glory, blue and white and red,—

The Southern cross without its bleeding load,  
 The milky way of peace all freshly strowed,  
 And every white-throned star fixed in its lost abode !

These lines were illuminated by the earnestness with which they were pronounced; the eye and voice of the speaker interpreted and vivified every word. He was heard with the greatest enthusiasm; it seemed, that like the best masters of painting in Italy, the poet was attaining a second manner, even more beautiful than his first, and had seized the occasion of an act of friendly justice to another, to make a revelation of his own increase of power.



The President, with Mrs. Bryant, followed by Mr. Bryant and Mrs. Howe, now led the way to the banqueting-room, of which the walls were adorned by pictures, painted by artists of the Century. All eyes turned to the portrait of Bryant by his venerable friend Durand, which was profusely decorated with laurel and the choicest natural flowers. After a short time given to the abundant feast provided by the House Committee of the Century, the company returned to the large saloon, where their first greeting was from the clergy.

The venerable Rev. Dr. Allen, formerly President of Bowdoin College, and honorably known to all students of American Biography, the friend of Bryant's father, familiar with the home of Bryant from his cradle, sent this benediction:

FOURSCORE YEARS TO THREESCORE YEARS  
AND TEN.

*November 3d, 1864.*

Thy years threescore and ten this day !  
Thy youthful poet-prophet's word  
Of TRUTH's great conflict made display,  
By which the soldier's soul is stirred.

“TRUTH, crushed to earth, shall rise again ;  
 The eternal years of God are hers ;  
 But error, wounded, writhes in pain,  
 And dies among his worshippers.”

BRYANT'S POEMS, page 209.

Another ten of years be thine  
 With His great love who came to save,  
 And ceaseless joys of truth divine  
 To cheer thy pathway to the grave.

The hills the same to our young eyes,  
 The same the vales, that gave delight ;  
 The loved ones, passed to peaceful skies,  
 Shall we not join in glory bright ?

Christ is the “WAY, the TRUTH, the LIFE ;”  
 He leads no trusting friend astray ;  
 His arm will end the valiant strife,  
 His grace give victor's crown for aye !

To WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, New York,  
 from WILLIAM ALLEN, Northampton, Mass., }  
 both natives of Western Massachusetts.

The next communication was from the Rev. Dr. James Walker, late President of the University of Cambridge.

#### EXTRACT OF DR. WALKER'S LETTER.

“I feel a peculiar interest in the festival in honor of Mr. Bryant, for I am a man of the same years, though having a few

months the start of him. I should also be glad to be there in order to testify the respect I have always entertained for his genius and character."

A highly respected Protestant Episcopal Clergyman of the far West sent the following:

TO WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT,

ON HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.

*November 3, 1864.*

Thy patient feet have reached to-day  
 The allotted goal of human years ;  
 Thanks, thanks to Him who bids thee stay  
 Awhile, yet, from the timeless spheres.

Thanks for thy journey brave and long ;  
 A glorious pathway has it been,  
 Melodious with majestic song,  
 And hallowed in the hearts of men.

Earth's face is dearer for thy gaze.  
 The fields that thou hast travelled o'er  
 Are fuller blossomed, and the ways  
 Of toil more pleasant than before.

The April pastures breathe more sweet,  
 The brooks in deeper musings glide,  
 Old woodlands grander hymns repeat,  
 And holier seems the Autumn-tide.

The crystal founts and summer rains  
 Are haunted now with pictured grace ;  
 The winds have learned more tender strains,  
 And greet us with more kind embrace.

More meekly pleads each flow'ret's eye,  
 On gentler errands comes the snow,  
 And birds write on the evening sky  
 More gracious lessons, as they go.

The clouds, the stars, the sea, the grave,  
 Wide prairie wastes and crowded marts,  
 All that is fair, and good, and brave,  
 In peaceful homes and gen'rous hearts,

Through thee their wond'rous meanings tell :  
 And as men go to work and pray—  
 Feeling thy song's persuasive spell—  
 Love's face seems closer o'er their way.

Before thee Error howled and fled ;  
 And in thy path, though bold and strong,  
 Oppression quailed. From thy hand sped  
 The glittering shafts that crippled wrong.

And thy lips swelled the stirring peal  
 That roused the people to uphold  
 The sacred cause of commonweal.  
 O, may thy happy eyes behold

Fair Freedom's triumph, and the sway  
 Of Peace, which after strife and pain,  
 Shall usher the illustrious day  
 Of a great Nation born again !

Smooth be thy latest stages here,  
 Revered, and loved, and watched by those  
 To whom thou seemest still more dear,  
 The further on thy journey goes.

And keeping yet the child-like heart—  
 Pure home of every sacred guest—  
 At last, in perfect peace, depart,  
 O Bryant, to thy blissful rest.

H. N. POWERS.

DAVENPORT, IOWA, *Nov.*, 1864.

The Century regretted exceedingly the absence of the Rev. Dr. William A. Muhlenberg. To friendly responses in reply to their invitation he added :

EXTRACT OF DR. WILLIAM A. MUHLENBERG'S LETTER.

“ I beg of him whom you mean so justly to honor, the acceptance of my greetings on his entering his threescore and ten, while

yet in the spring-time of his Muse—the truest poet of Nature in our land, may he long live to attune his chords to the Supernatural as well.”

The Rev. Charles T. Brooks, who, as he said, was “with us at all events in the spirit,” wrote :

EXTRACT OF REV. CHARLES T. BROOKS’S LETTER.

“Mr. Bryant has been for—fifty years shall I say?—one of my noblest teachers in the school of beauty, wisdom, and piety ; and my heart and all that is within me draws me to the festival at which so many fine minds and noble hearts will express for me my feelings of gratitude, respect, and veneration !”

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM REV. DR. A. CLEVELAND COXE,  
BISHOP ELECT OF THE WESTERN DIOCESE OF NEW YORK,  
TO THE CENTURY.

“Thanking you for the honor of your invitation to attend a celebration of the 70th anniversary of our distinguished fellow-citizen, Mr. Bryant, I am very sorry, as an admirer of his poetical genius, that other engagements will not permit of my being present with you on the evening of Saturday next.”

The Rev. Dr. Samuel Osgood, of the Century, being present, spoke as follows :



## THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE ARTS.

What sentiment is more in time and place than that of the "Fellowship of the Beautiful Arts"? Here are Architecture, Sculpture, Painting—those arts that depend most upon the hand, and appeal most to the eye; here, too, are Music, Poetry, the Drama, Eloquence—those arts that depend mainly upon the voice, and appeal mainly to the ear; here they all are in the persons of accomplished masters, and pledge each other in loyal brotherhood. Arts of the two imperial senses, the Eye and the Ear, they are the two doors of the Gate called Beautiful that leads into the temple of the Highest. The venerable chiefs of them both are here; for that portrait of BRYANT from the pencil of DURAND brings the powers of the eye and ear into unison, and those garlands are their coronation. Let us all say, "Long live that union and those men."

How marvellous are those two senses and the arts that appeal to them! The eye and the ear, how different, yet how like; the one more exterior and expansive, the other more close and intensive; the one moving on waves of light, the other on waves of air; the one rejoicing in form and color, light and shade, the other in tone and melody, cadence and swell; the one, perhaps, more material, the other more spiritual; yet both almost like different functions of the same sense and different oracles of the same law, matching the tints of the prismatic spectrum with the chords of the musical scale, as if color voiced itself into song, and song shone forth into color. Thus one, and thus different, the eye and the ear are like the Eros and Psyche of old, more of Eros in the eye, more of Psyche in the ear, yet both one in that loving embrace

which all arts have so celebrated, both classic and Christian, and which even the Christian muse has been not ashamed to call a type of the mystical union of body and soul in the life immortal.

All the arts of the eye and ear greet each other here, and put to us who are not of their craft the question, What right have we to be here among these masters? Right enough; and by right, not by favor, we claim our place—the right of the scholar to be with the master, the right of the devotee to be at the shrine. We are all, even the humblest of us, at home here, as scholars or lovers of art; and without such companionship, what can artists do, and who will appreciate and encourage them? It is a great law of life that original genius in the master needs genial susceptibility in the disciple, as the seed needs the soil to grow in. Such geniality we all have, and none more so than those here present who are our most modest guests—those fair friends of our artists. If art has its kings, why not its queens? and a queenly genius charmed us just now.

Why not say that we, too, all of us, are, or ought to be, artists, and have something to do with shaping rough material into ideal perfection? Why surrender the honors of this fellowship to any exclusive set of men? Why not rather maintain that it is the work of every true life to work out a noble ideal according to the wisdom that is from God, by the love that seeks Him as its end, and in the kingdom that gathers all that is lovely to Him in blessed communion? Only as we take this stand do we honor the arts duly, and save our gifts from conceit, and make genius a bond of unity, instead of a crazing hero-worship. All the arts are greater than our artists, and poetry is greater than the greatest poet. Every man is a debtor to his calling, and the higher the calling the greater

is the debt. We are the poet's friends and admirers, not his adorers, and his gentle bearing and speech help us to honor high Art and its Divine Archetype in honoring this gifted and faithful servant. The true check upon adulation is responsibility ; and he who takes his talents from the hand of the Perfect Master is in no danger of being spoiled by flattery, but rather measures dignity by service, and is humbler as he soars, because nearer to the Eternal Mind.

I will not undertake to preach here to-night, for we are all free companions, unassuming good fellows, in this Century Club, without any bigots or bores, that I know of ; but I am in perfect keeping with your general temper, and the spirit of our honored guest, in affirming that religion is the supreme art, and God is the Supreme Designer, flooding the skies with glory, filling the earth with loveliness, calling all souls to build life according to His perfect archetype, and to worship and enjoy Him in the beauty of holiness. No other than He gave this poet, our brother, his gift and mission ; and God, who rounded and rolled the spheres, taught him as a child the sweep of his vision and the rhythm of his verse. Seventy years of God's providence stand before us in that honored form, and we hear their solemn footsteps with the march of this festive music. What a seventy years—1794—1864—from the fall of Robespierre and French terrorism to the downfall of American slavery and its code of terror ; from the rise of Napoleon to the uprising of this free Republic ! God grant that our poet may sing its grand jubilee, every shackle broken, and every lost star returned ! What ages of invention, enterprise, and thought are concentrated into that space ! How mildly, yet mightily, those years are embodied and interpreted in that face, and voice, and pen ! How

much there is in that presence to bring our own changing years together, and to assimilate our different lives ! Some of us had his verse sung to us in infancy ; almost all of us read his “Waterfowl,” and “Green River,” and “Thanatopsis,” at school. Every fair scene in nature is fairer by his interpretation ; the nation, liberty, humanity, God, are nearer and dearer to us by his stirring odes, and calm, uplifting hymns. Nor let his prose writing be forgotten in our zeal to do honor to his verse, for he who is master of prose is master of all beauty ; and in this work, the poet and historian are one as here at our festival, in host and guest. The pen as thus wielded builds, paints, and carves ; sings, rhythms, acts, and pleads, and calls all the Muses at its spell.

God bless our poet, and the whole fellowship of the beautiful arts ! These forty artists have brought to you in that portfolio the precious offerings of their gifted hands. In the name of our scholars and pastors, as one of their hearty brothers, I bring a leaf of palm to lay among your laurels in behalf of the Art Divine, that is second to none of the Arts, and the inspiration of all.

The President next directed attention to poets and friends who were absent. An earnest invitation had been extended to Mr. John Pierpont.

#### EXTRACT OF MR. PIERPONT'S LETTER IN REPLY.

At first I said within my heart, I'll go.—  
But second thoughts forbade me to engage,  
At such a time in such a pilgrimage.

My health infirm, the season, and my age,  
 —(For more than half my eightieth year is spent,)—  
 Admonish me to stay at home content,  
 And worship, like the Sabian, from afar,  
 Kissing my hand towards our brightest star.

EXTRACT FROM MR. CHARLES SPRAGUE'S REPLY.

"Your tempting request comes to me on my own birthday (October 26). Now and then, and only now and then, do I regret the infirmities of three-and-seventy years. I am sensibly reminded of them at the present time, for I am thereby deprived of the privilege of uniting in a worthy tribute to one whose fame is the honest pride of us all."

As the President pronounced the name of Mr. Longfellow, there was a general movement, which showed that no man in the country would have received a more tender and hearty welcome.

EXTRACT OF MR. HENRY W. LONGFELLOW'S LETTER.

CAMBRIDGE, *Oct. 23d*, 1864.

MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT:

I assure you nothing would give me greater pleasure than to do honor to Bryant, at all times and in all ways; both as a poet and as a man. He has written noble verse, and led a noble life; and we are all proud of him. I am glad you are to pay him the



homage of this Festival ; and should rejoice to take part in it, if it were possible. But I am really too unwell to be present, and must, though with extreme reluctance, decline your very cordial invitation.

I remain, dear Mr. Bancroft,

Yours truly,

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

The Century regretted the absence of Mr. Lowell, and still more "the bitter occasion of it." Their invitation found him a mourner at the obsequies of his nephew, Charles Russell Lowell, the best scholar among his contemporaries, from boyhood full of soul and of honor, faultless as friend, brother, son, husband, patriot, and soldier ; who, equal to any career, had, on the breaking out of the rebellion, given himself up to his country with unselfish love ; lithe, delicately framed, active, imperturbably self-balanced, with a quick eye and celerity of thought and judgment, had in rapid succession commanded a company of cavalry, a regiment, a brigade ; had in many a field, as at Antietam, braved the hailstorm of bullets ; had in the one campaign of the Shenandoah, had thirteen horses shot under him in battle ; had, on the nineteenth of October, nothing daunted by one terrible wound, still led the final glorious cavalry charge ; and had fallen by a second wound in the moment of consummated



victory; leaving a widow of twenty, himself not yet thirty; beautiful in death, as in life he had been lovely.

EXTRACT OF MR. JAMES R. LOWELL'S LETTER.

MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT :

I was just about to write and say how glad I should be to join in your coming festival, when the sad news came which makes it impossible that I should do so.

It would have been a particular gratification to me, could I have joined in any public expression of respect for Mr. Bryant, who as Poet has done so much for the honor of his country, and, as Editor, so much for its salvation. The lesson of his character and example seems to me of such lasting value that I am rejoiced to hear attention called to it in a manner so distinguished.

ON BOARD THE SEVENTY-SIX.

BY JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

Our ship lay tumbling in an angry sea,  
Her rudder gone, her mainmast o'er the fide ;  
Her scuppers from the waves' clutch staggering free,  
Trailed threads of priceless crimson through the tide ;  
Sails, shrouds, and spars with hostile cannon torn,  
We lay, awaiting morn.

Awaiting morn, such morn as mocks despair ;  
And she that bore the promise of the world

Within her fides, now hopeless, helmless, bare,  
 At random o'er the wildering waters hurled,  
 The reek of battle drifting slow a-lee,  
 Not sullener than we.

Morn came at last to peer into our woe,  
 When lo, a sail ! now surely help is nigh,  
 The red cross flames aloft, Christ's pledge,—but no,  
 Her black guns grinning hate, she rushes by  
 And hails us. "Gains the leak? Ah, so we thought ;  
 Sink, then, with curses fraught !"

I leaned against my gun still angry-hot,  
 And my lids tingled with the tears held back ;  
 This scorn methought was crueller than shot ;  
 The manly death-grip in the battle-wrack,  
 Yard-arm to yard-arm, were more friendly far  
 Than such fear-smothered war.

Some, faintly loyal, felt their pulses lag  
 With the slow beat that doubts and then despairs ;  
 Some, caitiff, would have struck the starry flag  
 That knits us with our past, and makes us heirs  
 Of deeds high-hearted as were ever done  
 'Neath the all-seeing sun.

But one there was, the Singer of our crew,  
 Upon whose head Age waved his peaceful sign,  
 But whose red heart's-blood no surrender knew ;  
 And couchant under brows of massive line,

The eyes, like guns beneath a parapet,  
Watched charged with lightnings yet.

The voices of the hills did his obey ;  
The torrents flashed and tumbled in his song ;  
He brought our native fields from far away,  
Or set us mid the innumerable throng  
Of dateless woods, or where we heard the calm  
Old homestead's evening psalm.

But now he sang of faith to things unseen,  
Of freedom's birthright given to us in trust,  
And words of doughty cheer he spoke between,  
That made all earthly fortune seem as dust,  
Matched with that duty, old as time and new,  
Of being brave and true.

We, listening, learned what makes the might of words,—  
Manhood to back them, constant as a star ;  
His voice rammed home our cannon, edged our swords,  
And sent our boarders shouting ; shroud and spar  
Heard him and stiffened ; the sails heard and wooed  
The winds with loftier mood.

In our dark hour he manned our guns again ;  
Remanned ourselves from his own manhood's store ;  
Pride, honor, country, throbbled through all his strain ;  
And shall we praise? God's praise was his before ;  
And on our futile laurels he looks down,  
Himself our bravest crown.

Public duty detained Mr. Whittier at home ; but he did not fail to send what he called "a rough draft of some verses," which seemed to others exquisitely finished.

## BRYANT.

BY JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

I praise not here the poet's art,  
 The rounded fitness of his song ;  
 Who weighs him from his life apart  
 Must do his nobler nature wrong.

Not for the eye familiar grown  
 With beauty elsewhere undescried,—  
 The marvellous gift he shares alone  
 With him who walked on Rydal fide ;

Not for rapt hymn nor woodland lay  
 Too grave for smiles, too sweet for tears,  
 We speak his praise who wears to-day  
 The glory of his seventy years !

When Freedom hath her own again  
 Let happy lips his songs rehearse :  
 His life is now his noblest strain,  
 His manhood better than his verse.

Thank God ! his hand on Nature's keys  
 Its cunning keeps at life's full span ;

But dimmed and dwarfed, in times like these,  
The Poet seems beside the Man!

So be it!—Let the garlands die!  
Fade civic wreath and finger's meed!—  
Let our names perish if thereby  
Our country may be saved and freed!

A letter was then read from one, who, had he been present, would have found himself environed by friends, and the object of universal respect. His words were as follows:

BOSTON, 25th October, 1864.

MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT:

I deeply regret that I cannot be with you on the evening of the 5th, to join you in doing honor to the Nestor of our American poets. The Nestor of our poets, I may call him, for more than one reason, for of his poetry it may be truly said, as of the speech of the Homeric Veteran,

*Τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδὴ.*

Having myself touched the goal of threescore years and ten, but a few months earlier than Mr. Bryant, I can, better than some of you youngsters, enter into the sentiment of the tribute which you are paying to him.

I have through life been a great lover of Mr. Bryant's poetry. My admiration of it began in early youth, with his first productions, and is one of the juvenile tastes, which after years and severer habits of thought have confirmed and strengthened.

I particularly enjoy Mr. Bryant's poetry, because I can understand it. It is probably a sign that I am somewhat behind the age, that I have but little relish for elaborate obscurity in literature, of which you find it difficult to study out the meaning, and are not sure that you have hit upon it, at last. This is too much the character of the most popular poetry of the modern English school.

On the contrary, our noble poetical trio, Bryant, Longfellow, and Whittier, are always easily intelligible. They touch the finest chords of taste and feeling, but they never strain at effect. This, it seems to me, is the highest merit, in every department of literature, and in poetry it is well called Inspiration. Surprise, conceit, strange combinations of imagery and expression, may be successfully managed, but it is merit of an inferior kind. The truly beautiful, pathetic, and sublime, is always simple and natural, and marked by a certain serene unconsciousness of effort. This is the character of Mr. Bryant's poetry.

I congratulate the Century Club on the opportunity of paying this richly earned tribute of respect and affection to their veteran, and him on the well-deserved honor.

The taste, the culture, and the patriotism of the country are, on this occasion, in full sympathy alike with those who weave and with him who wears the laurel wreath.

Happy the community that has the discernment to appreciate its gifted sons,—happy the poet, the artist, the scholar, who is permitted to enjoy, in this way, a foretaste of posthumous commemoration and fame!

I remain, my dear Mr. Bancroft, with sincere affection, ever truly yours,

EDWARD EVERETT.



It was now recalled to mind that Mr. Bryant had been bred to the law. The Century hoped at this time to hear the voice of their venerable ex-President, who had so long and so efficiently taken the chief part in the conduct of their affairs. They heard with sorrow that he was detained from his old friends by his grandson, who was suffering from very severe wounds, received in defence of his country.

Saturday, 5th November, 1864.

HON. GEORGE BANCROFT,

*President of The Century:*

I regret that I must decline the kind invitation of the President and Committee of management to be present at the meeting of the Century this evening to congratulate their most distinguished member on his Seventieth birthday.

Peculiar circumstances put it out of my power to be personally present, but I cordially join in the warm praises and wishes which will be expressed to-night by many eminent men and felt by all.

The present kindly and genial autumn, "so mercifully dealing with the growths of summer," resembles so much Bryant's own advancing age, that I cannot but use his own simply beautiful words to express to him the feelings and wishes of a friendship of many years :

"Like the kindly season may life's decline come o'er him;  
 Past is manhood's summer, the frosty months are here,  
 Yet be genial airs and a pleasant sunshine left him,—  
 Leaf, and fruit, and blossom, to deck the closing year."

With my best regards to my fellow members and their guest of the evening,

I remain yours,

G. C. VERPLANCK.

After reading this letter, the President introduced the Attorney of the United States for the District of Massachusetts.

#### SPEECH OF RICHARD H. DANA, JR.

MR. PRESIDENT :

While I thank you and the gentlemen of the Century Club for the privilege of taking part in this most interesting commemoration, I feel that it is rather in a representative capacity than from any personal claims, that I am here. Mr. Bryant has kindly named first in his enumeration of his friends not with us to-night, one whose name it is my fortune to bear in another generation. I assure Mr. Bryant that there is no one among his almost countless friends, present or absent, whose thoughts gather more fondly about the associations which this day revives.

It is now nearly fifty years since my father and his kinsman, Professor Channing, editing the North American Review, received a manuscript poem, from an anonymous author, offered for publication in that journal. They read it again and again. It could not be said to give promise, to hold out indications, of powers to be developed by time. It was the matured, finished work of one already a master. We had then no such man in America. They naturally suspected that it might be the work of one of the mature

poets of the first rank across the water, or possibly a translation from one of the master minds on the continent unfamiliar to them. They gave it a place in their columns. At once, it commanded its own place in the permanent literature of the English tongue. Its title was "Thanatopsis"!

But who was the author? They found it was the first considerable effort of a youth, since grown to full manhood, who had never been beyond the hills of Western Massachusetts. Having been a scholar in the college at Williamstown, he had studied law, and had just been admitted to the Bar in the rural county of Berkshire. An acquaintance began, which ripened into a friendship of nearly half a century, and which I have a double reason for hoping the Great Separator may spare for many years to come.

No poet, Sir, can hope for permanence to his fame unless he connects himself with something permanent in human nature. Mr. Bryant has always been true to Nature and to Freedom. A hard necessity called him from the banks of the river he had made immortal, from the flowers, the fields, the breezes, the birds, the trees, the skies, he loved as his life, to the hard pavements of your great city,—to the unpitying stones of Wall Street. There, in the dingy editorial closet, amid the life-consuming sounds of the publishing house of a daily commercial and political journal, he was cheerful, hopeful, and loyal. Never did he pervert his sacred trust of divine poetry to the service of fashion, or trade, or party. True to nature, nature was true to him. Outside the city in which he sat a captive, earth, sea, and sky were full of his unsubsidized allies. The air breathed, blue ocean sparkled, the leaves shook, the birds of the air sang comfort and strength to his brave, patient spirit. And now he is spared to see Freedom rising again to power and

dignity throughout the land, and Slavery, like his own immortal impersonation of Error, dying amidst its worshippers.

Yes, Sir, so long as there shall be found a true love of simple nature, the Green River, the Water Fowl, the Evening Wind, the Death of the Flowers, will be cherished. Wherever there is a soul capable of noble seriousness, the Thanatopsis and the Lines to the Past will be remembered. And wherever, in any clime or age, there is one man struggling for Truth and Freedom, his fainting spirit shall be revived by those words, which, hackneyed though they be, time cannot wither nor custom stale :—"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again."

The theme was continued by a member of the Century.

SPEECH OF WILLIAM M. EVARTS.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN :

I do not know what right I have to speak, or what claim to be heard, on this occasion of our festive homage to the genius and renown of Mr. Bryant, unless simply as a member of the community upon whom, by his residence among them, he has shed so much lustre.

Yet, Sir, it is very fit that the public and learned professions should join with the poets, and scholars, and artists, who have shown themselves with so noble and brilliant a presence here to-night, in this graceful and truthful testimony that the poet, more fortunate than the prophet to whom, in some sort, he has succeeded, is *not* without honor in his own country. For what preacher

is there among us but will readily admit that, in the larger phrase and function of *teacher*, Mr. Bryant, in his poems and in the daily instructions of his press, has been a faithful and constant help and support to the sacred office in every lesson of worthy life and of personal and social duty. And what lawyer will gainsay that in his noblest name of *Advocate*, the friend whom we honor to-night, has been by his side, battling for truth and justice and common right in every generous cause in the wide forum of public opinion, that tribunal of last resort in a free and enlightened country.

Much has been said, Sir, of Mr. Bryant's love of nature and of his love of art, and they have been insisted upon, with much force and beauty, as principal traits of his character and of his poems. So far, if we may trust Mr. Emerson's vivid portraiture, did the passionate love of nature carry Mr. Bryant, that we owe to his great example a practice which has grown to be an omnipresent source of displeasure and annoyance to the enthusiasts who traverse our wide country in search of the picturesque, to find in every nook and corner the emblazoned names and fame of every quack and mountebank of high or low degree! For Mr. Emerson tells us, Mr. Bryant was the first to write his name upon the rocks and the mountains, and by the side of the rivers and the waterfalls, thus spreading his renown and drawing tribute from all nature. Alas! to what base perversions may not a bright example come.

But, Mr. President, on Mr. Bryant's love of art I have something more, and something more serious to say—Mr. Bryant was driven to be a poet by no necessity. He has no such excuse. He was bred and trained to an honorable, useful, and unselfish profession. I mean, of course, the profession of the law, for I may safely appeal to the candid judgment, I will not say of this audience



simply, but of the public at large, to bear me out in saying that, if there be any calling or employment whose followers exhibit in their whole lives, in their daily walk and conversation, a uniform tenor of disinterested, uncalculating, self-denying, self-sacrificing devotion to the good of others, without the remotest notion of fee or reward to themselves, it is the profession of the law. Now, Sir, what might not Mr. Bryant have done for the world, with his præëminent and enthusiastic love of *Art*, had he faithfully adhered to the profession of the law, instead of waywardly seeking his own sweet will with the muses? Where and how could his love of *Art* human, profuse and exuberant, have flowed out into more various or wider channels of practical influence, than in the ample scope for invention, illusion, false coloring, and deception, offered in a prosperous career in the law? We are told, indeed, that as it was, he aided in founding a new academy of *Design*. Pretty successfully, too, Mr. President, if we may judge of the proficiency of the academicians by the exhibition we have had from them here to-night. Certainly it is a *chef-d'œuvre* of design worthy of a whole academy, to charm your guest, and this company, into an admiration of the varied beauty and splendor of the numerous pictures which, at so costly toil of genius, they had made into a gift for this occasion, and yet, all that our eyes have seen is a leathern portfolio, closely locked, and for the rest, we have heard an artistic story that the key is accidentally lost, and an ingenuous regret that the sketches are *unfinished*! This is very well in a small way. But, think of Mr. Bryant, in his love of art, as the founder of a new school of design, in the profession of the law; a new school of scheme, contrivance, and chicanery; of surprise, simulation, and subterfuge! Who will begrudge a tear for this



glory lost to Mr. Bryant, to the profession, and to the world, when he was seduced from his early love of the law?

Mr. President, our profession has now borne, for more than a century, the reproach of having stolen from Apollo one of his golden-haired children and changed him into a dusty-wigged priest of Themis ;—Pope's lament,

“How sweet an Ovid was in Murray loft,”

commemorates the wrong. Thank Heaven! that account at last is settled. If we took from the muses young Murray, and made him the Chief Justice of England, they have robbed us of the youthful Bryant and made him the Chief Poet of America.

How keen a lawyer was in Bryant loft.

The last place was reserved for the offerings of old and new friends of Mr. Bryant, poets now or formerly of New York and its vicinity.

#### LETTER OF FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

GUILFORD, CONN., *Nov. 5th*, 1864.

MY DEAR SIR:

I am very grateful indeed for your kind invitation, and have most ardently hoped for the pleasure of being with you at the Coronation of our Patriarch friend, but I am deeply grieved to say that for a week past I have been quite ill, and find myself to-day, not only disabled from journeying, but from leaving my room, to my exceeding regret and disappointment.

I must therefore rely upon your courtesy to present my sad excuse to your President and Secretary for the non-performance of my promise, and to assure Mr. Bryant that, although far off in body, I shall be this evening near him in spirit, repeating the homage which with heart, and voice, and pen, I have during more than forty years of his "threescore and ten" been delighted to pay him.

Believe me, my dear sir,

Faithfully yours,

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

A. M. COZZENS, ESQ.

#### LETTER OF N. P. WILLIS.

IDLEWILD, *November 3, 1864.*

TO HON. GEORGE BANCROFT,  
*President of The Century.*

DEAR SIR :—I am in receipt of your very kind and complimentary invitation to be present at the celebration of the Birthday of Mr. Bryant by The Century.

I need not say to you with what unmingled satisfaction I accept the proposed honor—promising myself the happiness of being a looker-on at so unusual and gratifying a spectacle.

Being at present a sufferer from a *diphtheria*, by which I am deprived of *the voice* I might need to express a certain gratification I have, in connection with Mr. Bryant, I will venture so far as to express this on *paper*—my silence, whether it be, or be not, allotted to me by the festivities of the evening, running the risk of being a restraint to my enthusiasm.

On coming to the city, after graduation from college in 1827, and adopting a profession of which WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT was already the most skilful and admired practitioner, I unhesitatingly gave in my fealty to his preëminence—acknowledging both his genius as an occasional poet, and his skill and sterling value as a writer of prose upon leading topics. On both of these precentorships, he has ever since retained his hold—lighting his occasional fire of inspiration on the high and holy altar of poesy, and toiling faithfully and perseveringly at his more regular anvils, criticism, morals, and politics. During all this third of a century, I have been, as it were, a *Bryant-disciple*, committing most of his poems to heart with affectionate admiration, and copying his “leaders” often, into my own journal, with laudatory adhesion and corroboration. To be invited now, as a veteran brother editor and poet, to celebrate the coming round of Bryant’s seventieth birthday—*thirty-seven years after my first acknowledgment of his pre-eminence*—is a very great pleasure to me, my unembarrassed pen and ink must be permitted to say !

And, may I be permitted also to specify, a little more distinctly, my homage to Mr. Bryant?

His present eminence among all parties, as the unquestioned first poet of the country, has been gained, by him, in connection with *a career* which has its daily trials and temptations—a career which no one but an experienced editor of a newspaper would be likely fully to appreciate. Let me call the attention of the brother poets who are to celebrate his birthday, to the *undimmed lustre of the laurels worn so long*. If gardener or farmer, mere scholar or mere tradesman, were to set himself the task of writing “Thanatopsis,” or “The Life that Is,” or “The Cloud upon the Way”—

any or all of his earlier or his *Thirty Poems*—how uninterruptedly (if first inspired) might it all be done ! But for the daily Editor, the Critic, the Influencer of Public Morals, of Public Mercantile Interests and of Public Politics—for *him* to have thus set himself the task, and come from it as does Bryant—the acknowledged most independently reliable Editor, as well as the most irreproachable first poet—is an example not given us by the ancients. Let us allow that we are, in many ways, an improvement on the “bards” of old time. They, proverbially, in their latter days, became the victims of neglect, reproaching the world, and particularly their brother bards, for cruel depreciation and forgetfulness. In his last new volume (“*Thirty Poems*”) Bryant gives us the solving of this riddle. He says thus to “*The Poet*” :—

Thou, who wouldst wear the name  
Of poet 'mid thy brethren of mankind,  
And clothe in words of flame  
Thoughts that shall live within the general mind,  
Deem not the framing of a deathless lay  
The pastime of a drowsy summer-day.

But gather all thy powers,  
And wreak them on the verse that thou dost weave,  
And in thy lonely hours,  
At silent morning or at wakeful eve,  
While the warm current tingles thro' thy veins,  
Set forth the burning words in fluent strains.

\* \* \* \* \*

The secret wouldst thou know  
To touch the heart or fire the blood at will ?  
Let thine own eyes o'erflow ;  
Let thy lips quiver with the passionate thrill ;

Seize the great thought, ere yet its power be past,  
And bind, in words, the fleet emotion fast.

\* \* \* \* \*

So shalt thou frame a lay  
That haply may endure from age to age,  
And they who read shall say :

What witchery hangs upon this poet's page !  
What art is his the written spells to find  
That sway from mood to mood the willing mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is thus that he has himself acted "The Poet," and it is in this guise, and with the coronet bestowed by his contemporaries, that we commit him to Posterity.

Hoping to avail myself of your kindness, and be at least a looker-on at this most novel and interesting ceremony, I remain,

Dear Mr. Bancroft,

Yours most faithfully,

N. P. WILLIS.

## BRYANT.

BY E. A. STANSBURY.

"Show us a Bard," the old world cried,  
With look of scorn and tone defiant ;  
Columbia turned with queenly pride  
And pointed to the name of BRYANT.

"Show us a Man, with steadfast soul,  
On God and Right and Truth reliant,  
Unbent though tempests shake the pole ;"  
Again the name she gave was BRYANT.

Ah! blest, thus great and true to be,  
 Yet still with heart unchilled and pliant,  
 My Country! saved, restored, and free,  
 Thy purest name shall still be BRYANT.

NOVEMBER, 1864.

Mr. Street, of Albany, recited with great earnestness the following lines:

### POEM.

BY ALFRED B. STREET.

A fadeless wreath is thine  
 Oh poet of our love! its radiant twine  
 Not from the Old World's flowers,  
 But the unchanging foliage of the pine;—  
 Tree of our land that, century-cinctured, towers,  
 Foot on the rock and forehead in the sky;  
 Yet its deep bosom thrilling with a sigh  
 Although its boughs be glossed in golden dye;—  
 Emblem of thy true lyre  
 Sounding in solemn wail and bright in joyous fire!

The old oak, ivy-tressed,  
 Whose acorn rung on Arthur's warrior-crest  
 Along his knightly way,  
 No minstrel fervor kindles in thy breast.



But the wild hemlock, where the hunter lay  
 By his lone watch-fire, whence the startled flight  
 Of the young eagle that, with shrinkless fight,  
 Still dares the sun-flash, swings his soaring height  
     Within thy native strain,  
 And, frowning in his shade, the red man's flitting train.

Thy full-orbed genius sought  
 The blended realm of Nature and of Thought.  
     Heart watched beside the eye ;  
 The spirit colored what the vision caught ;  
 The warm life mingled with the earth and sky ;  
 Boughs waved with musings ; contemplation breathed  
 From flowers ; and Song's bright brow was never wreathed  
 With more befitting gifts than thine, bequeathed  
     To Time, its lofty plan  
 So true that genius wrought to nature and to man.

And Nature lives in thee !  
 The soul-expanding dome—its twin, the sea—  
     Peaks, pillars of the cloud—  
 The cataract's crash—the thunder's roll—the free,  
 Grand winds—the stately sweep of woods—the crowd  
 Of bird, tree, flower ; and, in her essence glassed,  
 Nature with grateful love shall hold thee fast,  
 As holds the gem its hues, while years shall last ;—  
     And every age shall praise,  
 For Nature every breast in close communion sways.

Each loved theme fings and shines  
 In Memory's heart ;—its fields Green River twines ;  
     Dread Thanatopsis chants ;  
 The Ages speak ; soar the cragged Apennines ;  
 Red floats the Waterfowl to sunset haunts ;  
 Flashes the fiery charge of Marion's Men ;  
 The unshorn Fields roll billowy from the ken ;  
 The murdered Traveller moulders in his glen ;  
     Monument Mountain towers ;  
 And cold November blights the gentle race of Flowers.

    Thy matin-strain arose  
 When native song scarce breathed ; while now it flows,  
     Sounding on every fide,  
 Still in our hearts thy golden music glows.  
 Our mighty land looks on thy wreath with pride ;  
 The future's plaudits echo in thine ear ;  
 Thy statue greets thee still in thy career ;  
 Thy star breaks, blazing, in life's sunset clear ;  
     Fame steps in front of death  
 In token of thy tones immortal in her breath.

    Day sheds its parting sheen ;  
 The heavenward rays stream softly o'er the scene ;  
     Birds twitter into sleep ;  
 The loitering kine pace home through darkening green ;  
 Along the trees, faint flumberous breathings creep ;  
 Far, dreamy sounds flit, melting on the air

That eastward thickens, while in hues more fair  
 The west burns down; bowed Nature, wrapt in prayer,  
     And robed in deepening light,  
 Hushes her peaceful heart to hail the hovering night.

Mr. Stoddard's stanzas were read by Mr. Bayard Taylor.

### VATES PATRIÆ.

NOVEMBER 3D, 1794—NOVEMBER 3D, 1864.

There came a Woman in the night,  
     When winds were whist, and moonlight smiled,  
 Where, in his mother's arms who slept,  
     There lay a new-born child.

She gazed at him with loving looks,  
     And while her hand upon his head  
 She laid, in blessing and in power,  
     In flow, deep words she said:

“This child is mine. Of all my sons  
     Are none like what the lad shall be,—  
 Though these are wise, and those are strong,  
     And all are dear to me.

“Beyond their arts of peace and war  
     The gift that unto him belongs,—  
 To see my face, to read my thoughts,  
     To learn my silent songs.

“The elder sisters of my race  
 Shall taunt no more that I am dumb ;  
 Hereafter I shall sing through him,  
 In ages yet to come !”

She stooped, and kissed his baby mouth,  
 Whence came a breath of melody,  
 As from the closed leaves of a rose  
 The murmur of a bee !

Thus did she consecrate the child,  
 His more than mother from that hour,  
 Albeit at first he knew her not,  
 Nor guessed his sleeping power.

But not the less she hovered near,  
 And touched his spirit unawares ;  
 Burned in the red of morning skies,  
 And breathed in evening airs.

Unfelt in his, her guiding hand  
 Withdrew him from the haunts of men,  
 To where her secret bowers were built  
 In wood, and grove, and glen.

Sometimes he caught a transient glimpse  
 Of her broad robe, that swept before ;  
 Deep in the heart of ancient woods,  
 Or by the sounding shore.

One prosperous day he chanced to see  
 (Be sure 'twas in a lonely place)  
 Her glance of pride, that sought his own—  
 At last her noble face!

Not as it fronts her children now,  
 With clouded brows, and looks of ire,  
 And eyes that would be blind with tears,  
 But for their quenchless fire!

But happy, gracious, beautiful,  
 And more imperial than a Queen;  
 A woman of majestic mould,  
 And most maternal mien.

And he was happy. For in her  
 ("For he," she said, "shall read my mind,")  
 He saw the glory of the earth,  
 The hope of humankind.

Thenceforth, wherever he might walk,  
 Through forest aisles, or by the sea;  
 Where floats the flower-like butterfly,  
 And hums the drowsy bee;

By rock-ribbed hills, and penfive vales  
 That stretch in shade between;  
 And by the soft-complaining brooks  
 That make the meadows green;

He felt her presence everywhere,  
 To-day was glad, to-morrow grave ;  
 And what she gave to him in thought,  
 To us in song he gave.

In stately songs, in solemn hymns,  
 (Few are so clear, and none so high,)  
 That mirrored her, in calm and storm,  
 As mountain lakes the sky.

And evermore one Shape appeared,  
 To comfort now, and now command ;  
 A bearded man, with many scars,  
 Who bore a battle-brand !

And she was filled with serious joy,  
 To know her poet followed him ;  
 Not losing heart, nor bating hope,  
 When others' faith was dim.

And, as the years went slowly by,  
 And she grew stronger, and more wise,  
 Stretching her hands o'er broader lands,  
 And grander destinies :

And he, our poet, poured his hymns,  
 Serene, prophetic, sad,—as each  
 Became a part of her renown,  
 And of his native speech ;



She wove, by turns, a wreath for him,—  
 The business of her idle hours ;  
 And here were sprigs of mountain pine,  
 And there were prairie flowers.

And now, even in her sorest need,  
 Pale, bleeding, faint in every limb,—  
 She still remembers what he is,  
 And comes to honor him.

For hers, not ours, the songs we bring,—  
 The flowers, the music, and the light ;  
 And 'tis her hand that lays the wreath  
 On his gray head to-night !

R. H. STODDARD.

NOVEMBER 3d, 1864.

One more poem graced the evening ; the tribute of a  
 long and intimate friendship.

TO WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT—ON HIS  
 SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.

BY H. T. TUCKERMAN.

Calm priest of Nature, her maternal hand  
 Led thee, a reverent child,  
 To mountain-altars, by the lonely strand,  
 And through the forest wild.

Haunting her temple, filled with love and awe,  
 To thy responsive youth  
 The harmonies of her benignant law  
 Revealed consoling truth.

Thenceforth, when toiling in the grasp of Care  
 Amid the eager throng,  
 A votive seer, her greetings thou didst bear,  
 Her oracles prolong.

The vagrant winds and the far heaving main  
 Breathed in thy chastened rhyme,  
 Their latent music to the soul again,  
 Above the din of time.

The seasons, at thy call, renewed the spell  
 That thrilled our better years,  
 The primal wonder o'er our spirits fell,  
 And woke the fount of tears.

And Faith's monition, like an organ's strain,  
 Followed the sea-bird's flight,  
 The river's bounteous flow, the ripening grain,  
 And stars' unfathomed light.

In the dank woods and where the meadows gleam,  
 The lowliest flower that smiled  
 To wisdom's vigil or to fancy's dream,  
 Thy gentle thought beguiled.

They win fond glances in the prairies sweep,  
 And where the moss-clumps lie,  
 A welcome find when through the mould they creep,  
 A requiem when they die.

Unstained thy song with passions fitful hues  
 Or pleasure's reckless breath,  
 For nature's beauty to thy virgin muse  
 Was solemnized by death.

O'er life's majestic realm and dread repose,  
 Entranced with holy calm,  
 From the rapt soul of boyhood then uprose  
 The memorable psalm.

And roaming lone beneath the woodland shades,  
 Thy meditative prayer  
 In the umbrageous aisles and choral glades  
 We murmur unaware ;

Or track the ages with prophetic cheer,  
 Lured by thy chant sublime,  
 Till bigotry and kingcraft disappear  
 In Freedom's chosen clime,—

While on her ramparts with intrepid mien,  
 O'er faction's angry sea,  
 Thy voice proclaims, undaunted and serene,  
 The watchwords of the free.

Not in vague tones or tricks of verbal art  
 The pliant pæan rung ;  
 Thine the clear utterance of an earnest heart,  
 The limpid Saxon tongue.

Our country's minstrel ! in whose crystal verse  
 With tranquil joy we trace  
 Her native glories, and the tale rehearse  
 Of her primeval race,—

Blest are thy laurels, that unchallenged crown  
 Worn brow and silver hair,  
 For truth and manhood consecrate renown,  
 And her pure triumph share !

It being now near twelve o'clock, the President announced that an artist member of the Century had received a commission from a brother member, to make a colossal bust of Mr. Bryant, to be placed in the Central Park of New York City ; and thereupon the meeting was dissolved.

## APPENDIX.

The names of J. G. BROWN, JOHN ROGERS, and THOMAS P. ROSSITER are to be added to the list of the artist members, who presented sketches to Mr. Bryant. The copy of the following impromptu sonnet by a lady of New York City, was received by the Committee on Publication too late for insertion in its appropriate place.

## AT THE CENTURY.

*November 5th, 1864.*

BY MARY ELIZABETH WILSON SHERWOOD.

Bryant and Bancroft ! well assorted pair !  
 Beneath the Laurel and the fragrant Pine  
 Your country's lovers saw you standing there,  
 At once a memory, a hope, a sign.  
 The stirring music of the Poet's lyre  
 And the Historian's clear resounding line  
 The nation's heart with courage shall inspire,  
 And its crude gold to purer form refine.  
 The hour was dark, yet as with cheerful face  
 We honored him, the Poet, Patriot true,  
 Unwonted gladness seemed to fill the place ;  
 Nor can our hopes refuse to spring anew,  
 While Bryant's verse leads on our men to glory,  
 And Bancroft's pen illuminates their story.

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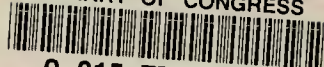








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